

Patricia K. Hahn
 1105 Regency Court
 Rapid City, SD 57702
patdocmike@rap.midco.net

RECEIVED

MAY 01 2006

Rapid City Growth
 Management Department

1 May 2006

TO: The Planning Commission
 300 6th Street
 Rapid City, SD 57701

TO: Rapid City Council
 300 6th Street
 Rapid City, SD 57701

After speaking to the Planning Commission on 6 April regarding the South Terrace Development, I spent four weeks doing extensive research regarding the history of these 160 acres. What is now clear to me is how this 4.8 du/ac designation came into being. While the Mayor and several Council members did view this land almost a year ago, I believe that due to the furor over the Wal-Mart issue—the fact the vote was postponed for month after month—and the neighbors (many who had spoken earlier in opposition) were not available on the night of the vote, this item was allowed to slide by uncorrected by the council. The following indicates a real need to review the designation on this parcel of land. The underlying and most critical issue is that the both the original plat and the secondary plat, as presented, destroy the land, put future residents in jeopardy, and give the citizens of Rapid City the impression that developer's profit is more important than preserving the hills for the future.

- I reviewed hundreds of pages of documents searching for any item that would indicate any Planning Commission member looked at this parcel over the past several years and prior to voting on issues concerning its development. I found none.
- Although not an agenda item at the Planning Commission meeting in November 2004, Dream Design requested a change of designation to 6.7 and commission member, Ms. Rodriguez, suggested a compromise of 4.8 du/ac without studying the issue. Since it was a special meeting concerning development of the Highway 16 Corridor, no one was present to argue an opposing position on the 160-acre residential development.
- When I questioned the 4.8 designation on 6 April, the City Attorney immediately stated his opinion that this designation could not be changed. I submit that the dwelling units per acre have been changed so often on the Future Land Use Map, most local citizens have no method for monitoring or for arguing against changes that have been made. I also note that while the City Attorney quickly offered a defense favoring the developer, he did not and has not (from what I have been able to ascertain) researched a solution for the opponents of this development. It would seem to me that to be fair and balanced, the City Attorney should at the very least offered an alternative resolution. If the Planning Commission and/or the City Council face an issue, which was approved due to an oversight or an error, they should be willing to send it back for further review. As no dirt has been moved and no construction started, now is the perfect time to review this issue.
- The most serious problem with this plat and du/ac designation is that it will require destruction of the land. It is obvious when you overlay the plat on the land, hills will be bulldozed flat, ravines with natural springs filled in and the entire topography of the area changed.
- Some of the lots will be backed up to a cliff face dropping almost 100 feet into a ravine. There is currently a house in Edinborough built on a similar cliff edge, which is sliding downward. Who will be legally responsible should the same scenario develop on the South Terrace side of the ravine?
- How long after major ravines, with sustaining springs, are filled in and hills leveled before the houses constructed on top of this fill begin to show damage? How long before basements begin to crumble and crack and major damage occurs to these homes?
- There have already been four landslides on hills adjacent to this property. Do we know what will happen as land is removed and hillsides bulldozed? What will be the resulting effect on the surrounding land?

- If the City Council approves the plat as presented, will the City be held responsible for the resulting damage to properties constructed on unstable land? We have seen the results of building on fill. Concrete fails and structural damage occurs. After having obtained the ultimate in density for the plat, current owners will profitably divest themselves of the property and any responsibility for incurred problems. It is very possible the future developer will point out that Rapid City Planning Commission and Rapid City Council approved everything on the plat. Therefore, they will claim the City is entirely responsible. The unsuspecting future homeowners will suffer major repair costs and many will be unable to shoulder the expense of repair. In my opinion, the City Council is morally mandated to prevent this scenario from occurring. As a taxpayer, I also want to assure this does not occur. This could be avoided if the land was platted responsibly. This is the property where it is appropriate to enhance the land – not overwhelm it.
- Another issue, which has not been addressed, is the long-term drought throughout the area. Six years ago this land was lush green with tall natural grass covering the hills. Ponds spotted the area. These small ponds have dried up and the land is currently extremely dry, but what will happen when the rains return and saturate the soil back to previous conditions?
- The final issue is traffic congestion and access to such a large development off Catron Blvd. DOT does not agree with the currently proposed access to the bypass. By adding hundreds of cars to the tourist season vehicles and present workday traffic volume, leaving and entering the present developments will be not only be frustrating, but dangerous.

I request the Planning Commission and Rapid City Council adopt the following:

- A standard method for assigning dwelling units per acre based on topography, existing neighborhoods, and traffic demands. This would remove any criticism of bias from the equation. Require all proposed 'first' plats to take into consideration existing land issues. This would remove the developer's argument that Growth Management approved the plan when they are opposed at a later date. My neighbors and I have serious reservations about how these past decisions were made and question if any criteria was used in the decision making process.
- A requirement for Planning Commission members to physically view future specific land developments prior to approving special requests or before making changes to the Future Land Use Committee decisions.
- And finally and most importantly to the City Council: Please send the issue on these 160 acres back to the Future Land Use Committee and the Planning Commission for an in-depth study before coming before the City Council for a final vote. If an engineering team is required, I suggest one completely independent from the present owners be utilized to conduct the study. This will preclude the appearance of a conflict of interest by Dream Design and the Rapid City Council.

Let me summarize by saying **I am not against** development of this area. I am, however, against a development that destroys the land and the topography for profit. There are many surrounding areas more appropriate for higher density tracts. The Rapid City Council needs to make a decision and take a stand regarding future land use planning. Will you try to maintain the beauty of this area and future developing areas? Will you ensure developers work with and around the land, or allow profit motive to determine how it will look in the years ahead? This is just the first of many arguments about topography to be made about the land as the City moves outward and southward toward the hills.

Sincerely,



Attachments: Photographs of topography
Copies to: South Hill and Edinborough Residents

RECEIVED

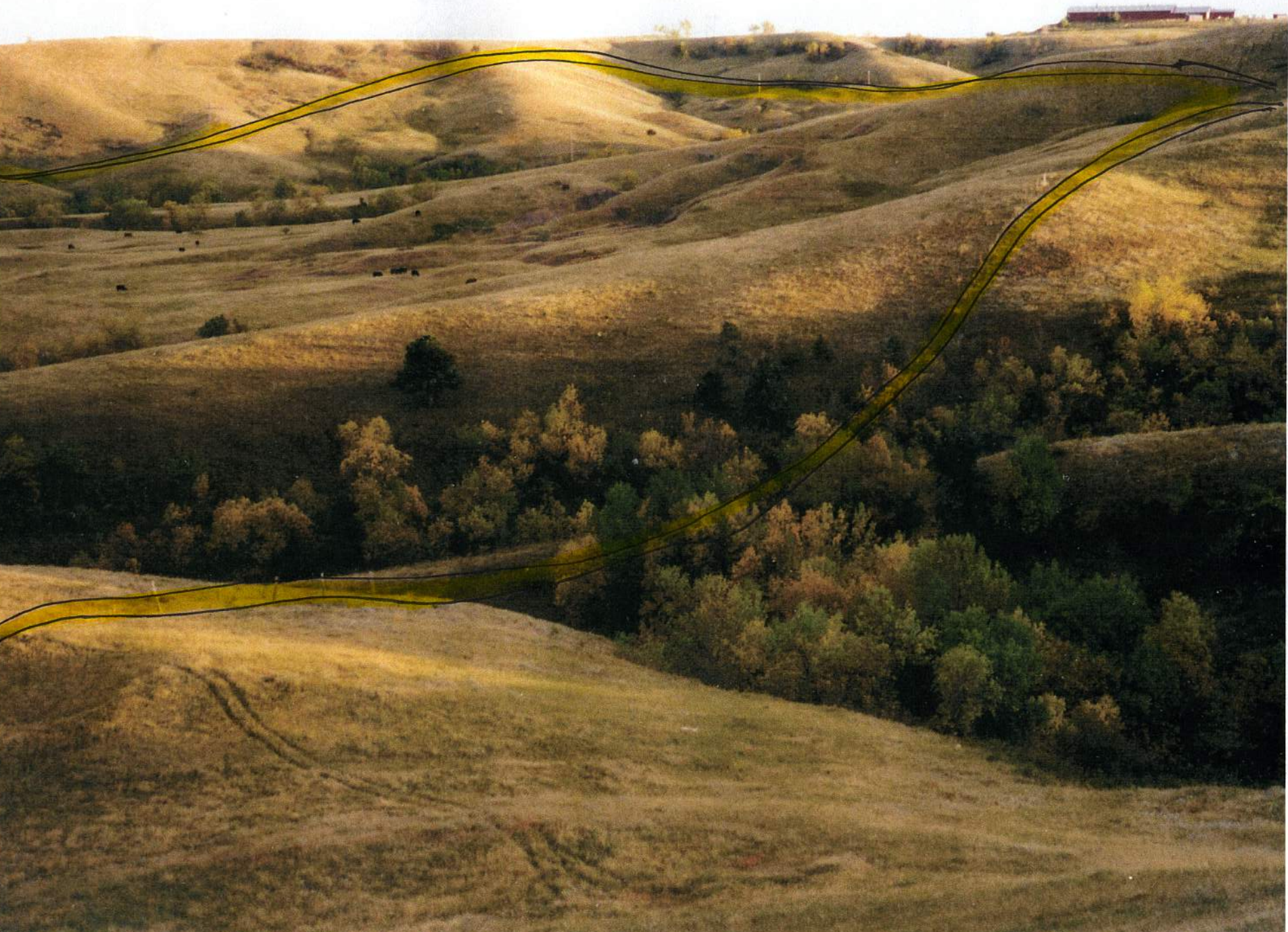
MAY 01 2006

Rapid City Growth
Management Department

THIS AREA WILL BE LEVELED ON CURRENT PLAN.



THIS IS NOT A 20' RAVINE. THOSE ARE MATURE TREES



SPRINGS ARE LOCATED IN THE CENTER RAVINE



IT APPEARS HOUSES ARE BACKED UP TO THIS CLIFF



ANOTHER VIEW OF CLIFF

